

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SCS-03 SCA-01

OPR-01 A-01 SY-04 AID-05 OMB-01 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 SAJ-01 /065 W
----- 051190

O 150625Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9374

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AEMR, CB, SOPN, US

SUBJECT: INACCURATE PRESS REPORTING ALLEGING EVACUATION OF AMERICAN
CITIZENS FROM CAMBODIA

REF: PHNOM PENH 2838

1. DCM CALLED IN INTERNATIONAL PRESS CORRESPONDENTS
TO EMBASSY THIS MORNING TO BRIEF THEM ON PRECISE NATURE OF
EMBASSY ADVICE GIVEN TO COMMUNITY FOR WHICH IT IS RESPONS-
IBLE IN THIS COUNTRY. THIRTEEN ATTENDED, FROM FOLLOWING
PAPERS AND SERVICES: ABC, CBS, NBC, AFP, UPI, AP, VOA,
WASHINGTON POST, NEW YORK TIMES, BALTIMORE SUN, LONDON
FINANCIAL TIMES AND ARMY TIMES. REASON FOR MEETING WAS
TO CORRECT MISINFORMATION WHICH HAD BEEN FILED FROM HERE
BY ASSOCIATED PRESS CORRESPONDENT AND WHICH HAS APPARENTLY
RESULTED IN WIDESPREAD INACCURATE NEWS COVERAGE IN
THE UNITED STATES AND ELSEWHERE.

2. DCM GAVE CORRESPONDENTS COPIES OF TWO LETTERS WHICH
EMBASSY SENT OUT YESTERDAY AND TODAY, ONE ADDRESSED
TO NON-OFFICIAL AMERICAN CITIZENS RESIDENT IN THE KHMER
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REPUBLIC, AND THE OTHER ADDRESSED TO THIRD COUNTRY

NATIONALS WORKING FOR OR UNDER CONTRACTS WITH THE USG OR FOR VOLUNTARY AGENCIES WHOSE WORK IS SUPPORTED BY THE USG. TEXT OF FORMER LETTER IS GIVEN IN REFTEL. TEXT OF LATTER LETTER IS SIMILAR IN CONTENT ALTHOUGH IT RECOMMENDS EVACUATION OF DEPENDENTS ONLY. DCM EXPLAINED TO CORRESPONDENTS THAT PURPOSE OF EMBASSY ADVICE COMMUNICATED BY THESE LETTERS WAS SIMPLY AND SOLELY TO ENCOURAGE DEPARTURE OF MAXIMUM NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS AND NON-ESSENTIAL CITIZENS RESIDENT AND TRANSIENT IN ORDER TO REDUCE TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE THE NUMBER OF POTENTIAL EVACUEES FOR WHICH THIS EMBASSY MIGHT AT SOME POINT BECOME RESPONSIBLE. DCM STRESSED THAT ALL 200 USG EMPLOYEES, ALL 85 TCN EMPLOYEES, ALL PERSONS WORKING FOR VOLUNTARY AGENCIES HELPING REFUGEES, ETC., ARE STAYING HERE ON THE JOB AND HAVE NO INTENTION TO EVACUATE UNDER CURRENT CONDITIONS.

3. AP CORRESPONDENT HAD WITH HIM TEXT OF STORY HE FILED LAST NIGHT, WHICH HE SAID WAS BASED ON TEXT OF LETTER GIVEN IN REFTEL, AND WHICH HE INSISTED WAS AN ACCURATE ACCOUNT OF ADVICE EMBASSY HAD GIVEN OUT. THE LEAD READ AS FOLLOWS: "THE AMERICAN EMBASSY SENT OUT A LETTER FRIDAY URGING ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS TO LEAVE PHNOM PENH "FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY AND WELFARE", THE LETTER SAID." DCM POINTED OUT TO HIM AND TO OTHER CORRESPONDENTS PRESENT THAT THIS LEAD, WHICH HAD CASUED A FLURRY OF INACCURATE PRESS REPORTING IN THE US AND DOUBTLESS ELSEWHERE, WAS ENTIRELY INACCURATE AND MISLEADING SINCE THE EMBASSY'S LETTER RECOMMENDED ONLY THE EVACUATION OF DEPENDENTS REPEAT DEPENDENTS AND AMERICAN VISITORS WHO HAVE NO ESSENTIAL REASON FOR BEING HERE. AP LEAD, IN CONTRAST, STATED THAT LETTER URGED "ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS TO LEAVE PHNOM PENH." AFTER SOME DISCUSSION AP CORRESPONDENT (MATT FRANJOLA, WHO NORMALLY TRIES TO GIVE US A FAIR SHAKE, AND WHO IN THIS INSTANCE WAS GUILTY OF NOTHING WORSE THAN SLOPPY WORK) AGREED THAT HE HAD MISREAD THE LETTER AND "TELESCOPED" SENTENCES FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF IT WHICH GAVE A QUITE DIFFERENT MEANING THAN THAT INTENDED BY THE LETTER. REMAINDER OF STORY FILED BY FRANJOLA, AFTER THE INAC-

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CURATE LEAD SENTENCE, WAS CORRECT, BUT UNFORTUNATELY IT'S THE LEAD THAT IS USUALLY PICKED UP BY OTHER NEWS SERVICES.

4. COMMENT: MISREADING OR MISINTERPRETATIO OF OUR LETTER BY AP CORRESPONDENT HAS UNFORTUNATELY DEFEATED OUR ATTEMPT TO TRANSMIT THIS ADVICE TO OUR COMMUNITY IN A LOW-KEY MANNER. WE WERE HOPING THAT THE SUGGESTION

THAT DEPENDENTS LEAVE WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF REDUCING
OUR NUMBERS BUT WITHOUT A GREAT DEAL OF PUBLICITY THAT
COULD CAUSE SOME DAMAGE TO PHNOM PENH'S MORALE. WE
BELIEVE THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS CORRESPONDENTS NOW HAVE
A COMPLETE AND ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF JUST WHERE
THIS EMBASSY STANDS ON THE QUESTION OF EVACUATION, AND
SOME OF THEM WILL FILE STORIES THAT WILL SET THE RECORD
STRAIGHT. UNFORTUNATELY THE ACCURATE STORY IS NOT
VERY EXCITING AND IT OBVIOUSLY WILL NOT RECEIVE THE
PLAY THAT THE INACCURATE AP LEAD DID YESTERDAY.
DEAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, INSTRUCTIONS, EVACUATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PHNOM02886
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750055-0743
From: PHNOM PENH
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750239/aaaabiqu.tel
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Review Date: 30 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
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Margaret P. Grafeld
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05 JUL 2006

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